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old families can easily be traced back thus far. Probably nine tenths of our native-born citizens of English descent can trace their pedigree for seven or eight generations with perfect accuracy. It would be impossible for an English herald to say to-day how many families were entitled in 1650 to use coats of arms, or how many are to-day thus distinguished. The large Dictionaries like Burke's, Edmondson's, and Berry's contain lists of all dates and of all degrees of authority. We can prepare a list of New England families, in which we will record none which has used a coat of arms for less than one hundred years, and we will fortify our claims by evidence conclusive to every inquirer.

And here we close, or rather with one word more we close, though the subject is far from being exhausted. Our last word is of thankfulness that all these heraldic distinctions, all these marks of class privilege, of social division, of hereditary distinction, are, except for the purposes of the historian in reconstructing the picture of our Colonial life, utterly gone, vanished from among us ; and that the American gentleman is one who receives his patent of gentility from no Heralds' College, but who, grateful for honest parentage, proves his gentle blood by virtue and fair manners.

"Man is a name of honor for a king,
Additions take away from each chief thing."

ART. X. — 1. *Democracy in America*. By ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE. Translated by HENRY REEVE. Edited, with Notes, by FRANCIS BOWEN. Third Edition. Cambridge: Sever and Francis. 2 vols. Post 8vo. 1863.

2. *Dissertations and Discussions, Political, Philosophical, and Historical*. By JOHN STUART MILL. Article on "Democracy in America." Boston: William V. Spencer. 1864.

THE controversy between the supporters of oligarchy and those of democracy, which has raged with greater or less heat ever since the middle of the last century, has drawn fresh vigor

from the spectacle of the American war. Both sides have found in this great struggle, not only, to use the pulpit phrase, "an occasion to improve," but an endless supply of illustrations for the enforcement or elevation of their respective theories. The one sees, both in the causes of the struggle and in the manner in which it has been conducted, a series of conclusive proofs of the failure of popular government ; the other finds in the incidents of each hour some new justification of its confidence in popular fortitude, honesty, and sagacity.

And the discussion has been exacerbated by the fact, that neither party has been a disinterested spectator of the contest. By the friends of democracy abroad, the convulsion through which the American commonwealth is passing is felt to be a crucial test of the soundness of those political opinions of which they have long been the champions, and with which their political fortunes are inseparably linked. To its friends in America it has come home as a personal calamity. It has either wasted their substance, or made their hearths desolate, or, which is often as hard to bear as either, it has inflicted lasting wounds on their pride. In the eyes of the party of aristocracy, too, it is not simply the political unity of the North American continent which is debated on Southern battle-fields, but the stability of their own order, the continuance of that form of social organization in which they have been bred, and with the security and perpetuation of which all that they hold precious in life is indissolubly connected. To them the defeat of the South signifies the triumph of that "principle of equality" from the spread of which they look not only for their own degradation, but, often honestly enough, for great danger to national liberty, and even to civilization itself.

And to appreciate thoroughly the intensity of the interest which this conflict of ours excites, we must keep in mind the width of the area over which its material consequences have been felt. There is no shore so distant that the waves of this great tempest have not broken on it. The term *orbis terrarum perturbatio*, which, as applied by Cicero to the great civil war of his day, was but a rhetorical exaggeration, may be bestowed on this one of ours with literal accuracy. The course of the great tides of commerce has been turned by it ; the industry of whole

nations has been revolutionized by it. From John O'Groat's to the base of the Great Snowy Range, there is no country to which its probable results and probable duration are not questions of tremendous moment.

One result, for which students of political philosophy will be thankful, has flowed from the increased sharpness which the events of the day have lent to the discussion, and that is the clearness and frankness with which the opposing parties have been led to enunciate their views. We doubt if the enemies of democracy ever before revealed their objections to it, and their anticipations as to its effects, with as much candor as since our war broke out. We now know, with a tolerable approach to exactness, what we did not know before, the kind of thing they believe it to be, and the kind and amount of evil they expect to proceed from its unchecked working. Excitement caused by the vicissitudes of the armed struggle has loosened the tongues of a great many men who were previously kept silent by caution or indolence, or from never having taken the trouble to put their conclusions into shape. When democracy was prosperous, many only shook their heads when it was mentioned who now make a clean breast of it, and tell the world in good set phrases what they have been thinking about it for years.

And, on the other hand, its friends have been roused by the same causes into more vigorous defence of it than they ever ventured on before. There are many persons in America to-day who five years ago looked grave over universal suffrage, or expressed private doubts of its success, but who are now to be found in the ranks of its most enthusiastic defenders, breathing defiance of aristocrats and aristocracy from every pore, and consigning every form of political organization in which power does not flow directly from the people, in yearly or biennial dribblets, to unutterable failure and confusion.

There has, however, in our opinion, been one great mistake made by some advocates of the democratic cause in their manner of conducting the controversy. It consists in ascribing *all* the attacks which have been recently made on democratic institutions to aristocratic malignity, to a blind, perverse pride of caste, or to stupid, over-reasoning prejudice against our politi-

cal and social organization simply because it is different from something else. There is no doubt, in England especially, a vast amount of ignorant depreciation of democracy by persons who have no better reason for objecting to it than a vague notion that it is vulgar, and a vast deal by others who hate it from the purely selfish consideration of the probable effect of its spread on their own social position or that of their families, or from the apprehension that it would introduce changes in manners which their temperament and education lead them to regard as obnoxious.

But in addition to these, democracy has had in this controversy a number of opponents — a small number, we admit — against whom we must employ better weapons than railing, whose character and arguments are both unquestionably respectable, and whose hostility to it is based on conclusions carefully formed, and which are enunciated, not certainly without feeling, but without rancor or irritation. They are thinkers who look on politics — ours as well as their own — in the clear white light of reason, and who, while differing from us as to the means of promoting it, share all our solicitude for the welfare of the human race. Nobody who has been familiar with the political literature of Europe for some years back can have failed to perceive the struggle between their hopes and fears which shows itself whenever these men speak of democracy, the ill-disguised apprehension with which they concede that its march is now irresistible, and the nervous industry with which they occupy themselves in providing breaks and buffers to restrain or direct its course. But it will not do, all will admit, to open on these men the batteries with which it might be proper to assail the bands who fight under the standard of the “Southern Independence Club,” and swear by such prophets as Mr. Roebuck or Mr. Lindsay.

The opinions of this class of persons about democracy may, we think, be fairly summed up as follows. They think the spread of democracy (meaning thereby the ascendancy of “the principle of equality,” to use M. de Tocqueville’s phrase, both in politics and in society) over every Christian country, at least, to be certain at no very distant day. They believe that no precaution can be taken and no barrier created which will

do more than postpone this result, and then for a very brief period. They think that this seems to be the remedy decreed by Providence for the removal of the great blot on our civilization, the physical misery and moral degradation of the lower classes. And they admit that the establishment of democracy, whether it take the shape of a republic or of a Cæsarean despotism, would doubtless be largely instrumental in securing for the bulk of the population a certain amount of coarse enjoyments, such as good shelter, good food, and good clothing, and a limited amount of education. But they hold that every democracy, however free at the period of its establishment, gravitates strongly towards subjection to a single absolute ruler, after a period of great corruption and disorder, and that it derives this tendency from certain inherent defects; and what these defects are, they fancy they are able to point out by an examination of what they see, or think they see, in the United States.

What they believe they learn about democracy from what they see here is, that it is fatal in the long run to any high degree of excellence in the arts, science, literature, or statesmanship; that it is hostile to every form of distinction, and thus tends to extinguish the nobler kinds of ambition, to create and perpetuate mediocrity, to offer a serious bar to progress, and even to threaten civilization with stagnation; that, by making equality of conditions the highest political good, it makes civil liberty appear valuable only so long or so far as its existence is compatible with equality; that it converts the ideal of the worst trained and most unthinking portion of the community into the national standard of capacity, and thus drives the ablest men out of public life; that it sets up mere success in the accumulation of money as the proof and test of national prosperity, and elevates material luxury into the great end of social progress; that it takes from manners all their grace and polish and dignity, makes literature feeble and tawdry, and oratory bombastic and violent; that it infuses bitterness into party struggles, while removing the barriers which in aristocratic societies soften and restrain its expression; and, finally, that, by the pains it takes to preserve the equality of conditions, it forces every member of the community to engage as soon as

he reaches manhood in an eager scramble for wealth, thus rendering impossible the existence of a class with sufficient leisure to devote themselves to the cultivation of the arts and sciences, or to speculative inquiry in any field of knowledge.

We do not mean to say that all of the foregoing charges are brought against democracy by any one of its enemies, but the whole of them may be found in a very small number of the speeches, articles, and treatises of one sort or other, which the political movements of the last fifteen years have called forth both in England and on the Continent; and it will be confessed by any candid American observer, that there are various phenomena, both social and political, to be witnessed in the United States which do give color to a large proportion of them. There is hardly one of them for which some foundation, or something like foundation, may not be found in some phase or other of American society or government.

If we asked an American of conservative tastes and opinions to say frankly what he thought of this picture, he would probably take exception to a very large portion of it; he would accuse it of gross exaggeration at least; and if asked to sketch the changes for the worse which, in his opinion, had taken place in American society within the last fifty or sixty years, he would present us with something different, but different rather in degree than in kind. He would say that there had been since the beginning of the century a great deterioration in the character, attainments, and social standing of the men sent by the Free States to fill the various offices of government. (For the purposes of this discussion, we leave the Slave States out of the argument, and for obvious reasons.) The men who now occupy the judicial bench, fill the national and State legislatures, and sit at the council boards and in the mayoral chairs of the great cities, are inferior in training, ability, education, and social position to those who filled the same positions fifty or sixty years ago. Forensic eloquence has, he would say, consequently undergone a corresponding change for the worse. It is neither so chaste, so simple, nor so forcible as it was at the time of the foundation of the government, and for many years after. The art of debating has all but died out, for it is an art which needs acute and ready intellect, saturated with reading and experience

and trained in fence, to sustain it. Speeches in Congress and in the legislatures on important questions are now, for the most part, long essays, written out previously, often full of irrelevancy and commonplace, and repeated altogether, or in a great degree, from memory, to inattentive audiences. If the orator is forced by circumstances to depart from his prepared course, and defend himself and his opinions extemporaneously against an extemporaneous attack, his scanty mental resources force him in the great majority of cases to fall back on personal vituperation. And the small amount of previous thought or culture which is revealed in the legislative discussions is, he would add, very remarkable. Hardly any subject seems important enough or exciting enough to call out anything much better than the philosophy of hotel parlors or the logic of newspaper articles. And what is worse than all this, legislation is confessedly more hasty, more reckless, and more ill-digested than formerly. And none of these things can be ascribed to any diminution in the number of men of culture and ability produced by the country in our day as compared with a former one. Their number bears, there is little doubt, a very much larger proportion to the population than it ever did. But they are uncereemoniously thrust aside from public life, and are generally found either toiling in commerce or in the professions, or else killing time and ambition in social trifling or in foreign travel.

Of the present as compared with the former condition of the bar, too, he would say, that not only has etiquette disappeared from it, but in a large number of the States the relations of judge and counsel are marked by a familiarity which, on one side at least, is mingled with a good deal of contempt. Admission to the profession has come to be, not a proof of fitness, but a political right; and the result is, that its ranks are crowded by needy aspirants, not after forensic distinction, but after money, whose want of learning and preparation for their duties, and entire exemption from the once powerful restraints of professional opinion, are fast destroying the reputation for lore, ability, and integrity which a former generation achieved for the American bar.

And if you direct his attention to the social condition of the

country, he will tell you that, while the habits of the American population are much more luxurious than they were half a century ago, while there is far more money in circulation, and while most of the pleasures of life are placed within the reach of a much larger class than in the earlier days of the Republic, the manners are not only less ceremonious, but less dignified and refined; that there is not only less punctiliousness, but less courtesy and grace in social intercourse; that the family bond is not so strong as it used to be; that there is less respect for authority, not only in the household, but in the state; that both the father and the judge find themselves much less important and less respected personages than they once were; that dress and manners have less weight and importance than formerly, and that there has grown up within thirty years a sort of affectation of carelessness in attire, in demeanor, and even in language; that the English of the bulk of the population is not so pure, nor their accent so refined, as those of the fathers; that more is now read, but less is digested, than in the last generation; and that in short, on the whole, there is both in externals and in mental characteristics less *finish* to be found amongst Americans of the present day than amongst those of half a century ago.

It matters not for our present purpose which of these portraits of American society is the more faithful. We are content to accept either of them as true, since the explanation which we propose to offer for the phenomena which they bring before us will, if it be of any value whatever, be as applicable to the first as to the last. But the moment we address inquiries as to the cause of these phenomena to any of the political sects of the present day, who are fairly entitled to the credit of either observing or thinking, we find ourselves launched on a sea of contradiction. If we apply to a "conservative," he will, if advanced in years, probably acknowledge the occurrence of the changes we have enumerated above, and will, in nine cases out of ten, assure us that it is foreign immigration that has done it all; that, if no Irish or Germans had ever come to the country, no changes for the worse, either in government or society, would ever have taken place. If we ask an Englishman of any but the radical school, or any of those native political phi-

losophers who import their opinions with their gloves and pomatum, and study science in Sir Archibald Alison and the Quarterly Review, they will tell us that whatever of decay or deterioration is visible in anything American is the direct and palpable consequence of universal suffrage, that democracy has ruined the country, and that the only road to improvement lies through revolution.

When we come to inquire to what extent the social or political condition of the Northern States has been influenced or modified by foreign immigration, we find ourselves dealing with a subject on which all those writers whose opinions are largely affected by their taste are agreed; and most of those who in America venture on political speculation belong to this class. If we take up the hundred laments over the degeneracy of our political condition, which issue from them every year in books, newspapers, speeches, and sermons, we shall find that in nine cases out of ten it is ascribed to the great influx of ignorant foreigners which has been going on for the last thirty years. In many, perhaps most, of the controversies which are carried on with European critics touching the state and prospects of the republic, this argument is put very prominently forward. Any coarseness, corruption, or recklessness, either of conduct or language, which shows itself in the management of our public affairs, and attracts the attention of foreign critics, is apt to be ascribed by the native advocate to the malign influence of the human drift which the convulsions and misfortunes of European society have cast on our shores.

We suspect that much of the prevalence of this theory is due to the fact, that those who most frequently put it forward in print live in the great cities, where foreigners are most numerous, where they are in the habit of acting in masses, and where their influence is most easily seen and felt. It is there that the evils which flow from their presence are most palpable; and those who have under their eyes its effects on the local government are apt to draw from the spectacle the most lugubrious inferences as to the condition of the rest of the country. But the estimate of the weight and extent of foreign influence upon politics and society, based on the impressions thus formed, is not confirmed by a careful consideration of the facts.

The whole number of foreigners who have entered the country between 1790 and 1860 is 5,296,414; and of these, 5,062,000 entered since the year 1820, or an average of 126,500 a year during forty years, being of course a mere dribblet when compared to the native population. The immigration since 1860 has been very large; and the number actually resident in the whole of the United States in that year was about 4,000,000, or less than one seventh of the entire population. But it is not since 1860 that the political or social deterioration which we are discussing has shown itself. One might imagine, on listening to some of the accounts one hears of the extent to which foreigners are responsible for the vices of American politics, that at least half the inhabitants of the Free States had for many years been persons of European birth, and that the intelligent and educated natives of the country had had a severe struggle, under universal suffrage, to retain any share in the government, and had been long threatened with seeing the management of a political system, which requires a large amount of virtue and knowledge on the part of those who live under it to enable it to work successfully, pass into the hands of a class of men bred in ignorance and degraded by oppression. But when it is taken into account that the foreign immigration has flowed slowly during a great number of years, that a large proportion of it has, of course, been composed of women and children, and that the small number of voters which it in any one year has contributed to the electoral body have been scattered over the Union from Maine to California, and have been divided into different camps by difference of language, religion, and nationality, and have been generally too ignorant and helpless to devise or pursue a common policy, it is easy to see that the current notion of the extent of their influence on national politics and on political life has been greatly exaggerated.

The only instance, we believe, in which the foreigners can be said to have combined to make their influence felt at the elections, occurred during the "Know Nothing" movement; but this was the result of a direct attack on their own privileges and standing. On all other occasions, we find them serving under American leaders, and assailing or defending

purely American ideas ; and so far from seeking position or influence by banding together, their great aim and desire are, as is well known, to efface all marks of their foreign origin, and secure complete absorption in the American population. And how do they accomplish this ? Not by imposing their ideas on the natives, or dragging them down to their level, but by adopting native ideas and manners and customs, educating their children in American habits, or, in other words, raising themselves to the American level. In fact, there is nothing they resent so keenly as any attempt to place them in a different category, or ascribe to them different interests or motives, from those of Americans. If they were conscious of the power of making themselves felt as a separate body, this would hardly be the case. So far from seeking to obliterate the distinction between themselves and Americans, they would endeavor to maintain and perpetuate it.

It may be said, however, that, although the foreign element in the population may not influence American politics in a way sufficient to account for the political changes of the last half-century directly by its votes, it does influence them indirectly by the modifications it effects in the national character through intermarriage and social intercourse. The effect upon temperament of intermixture of blood is very much too obscure a subject, in our opinion, to be safely made the basis of any theory of national progress or decline, even by those who attach most importance to it, and profess to know most about it. But even if we accord it all the force they claim for it, time enough has not yet elapsed to enable us to judge of its effects in this country. This much is certain, that the great features of the American character do not seem to have undergone any sensible change since the Revolution. The American of to-day, as an individual, presents very much the same great traits, moral and intellectual, which his father and grandfather presented before him ; the main difference between the three generations being, that the present one displays its idiosyncrasies on a very much wider field. A chemical analysis (as it has been termed) of natural character is, however, something from which no sound thinker will ever hope to arrive at conclusions of much value for any purposes not purely speculative.

As regards the influence exercised on American life by foreigners through the medium of social intercourse, we doubt very much if anybody has ever attached much importance to it who has given the matter any serious consideration. All that seems necessary to remove the idea that it has been instrumental in modifying either American opinions or manners, is to call attention to the class of society from which the immigrants are generally drawn, and to the social position which they occupy in this country. If we except a few lawyers, a few doctors, a few professors and teachers, and a few merchants in the large cities, eager to make money enough to enable them to return with fortunes to their native country, it may be said that ninety-nine out of every hundred foreigners who come to the United States with the intention of settling here are drawn from the ranks of the European peasantry ;— Germans, entirely ignorant of the English language ; and Irish, who, as well as the Germans, are separated from even the poorest of the native population by an entirely different standard of living, and a wide difference of habits and of religion. There is between them and even the lower grades of American society a barrier, which is none the less formidable for not being recognized by law. They fill, all but exclusively, the menial callings, and intermarriage between them and pure-blooded Americans is very rare. And, as we have said, so far from acting as propagators of foreign opinions or manners, the whole energy of the newcomers is spent, for years after their arrival, not in diffusing their own ways of thinking and feeling, but in strenuous and generally successful efforts to get rid of them, and adopt those of their American neighbors.

When we come to consider the European explanation of the defects which show themselves in the political and social system of the United States,—and it is an explanation which large numbers of Americans belonging to the wealthier classes have of late years been disposed to accept as the true one,—that they are the direct and all but inevitable result of the spread of democracy, we are met on the threshold by the authority of a great name, of which we desire to speak with all possible respect. That theory of the cause of the decline in the character and ability of public men in America, and the

consequent increasing corruption which marks our public life, of the decrease of respect for law and authority, and of the growing absorption in the pursuit of money, which, before the war at least, were so generally observed and deplored, undoubtedly owes to M. de Tocqueville most of its weight and authority. His "Democracy in America" was and is perhaps the most remarkable contribution to the philosophy of politics in modern times. It solves some of the most puzzling problems of a novel condition of society, and one of which the European world, prior to the appearance of his book, knew very little, with an ease and dexterity which it is impossible, even for those who mistrust many of his conclusions, not to admire. And the book is throughout evidently the product of laborious thinking and conscientious and painstaking observation, controlled by a sound philosophic method. Probably no one, and certainly no foreigner, was ever so successful in sketching American character, in catching the spirit of American life, and in revealing the nature and tendency of American ideas.

He has framed a theory of the influences and tendencies of democracy, partly *a priori* by deductions from the principles of human nature, and partly from his observations of social phenomena in France and America; and this is, we believe, the process now recognized as the only one that is trustworthy in the conduct of inquiries in social science. But the conclusions thus drawn depend inevitably for their soundness on the accuracy of the observations on which they are partly based, and by which alone their accuracy can, at present, be tested. If the peculiar state of opinions, feelings, and manners, and peculiar tone of thought, which M. de Tocqueville found in America, be not really altogether the result of equality of conditions, or of democratic institutions, that portion of his speculations which is dependent on the correctness of this assumption of course falls to the ground; and a very large portion of them is dependent upon it.

Nevertheless, to assume that those social phenomena which are peculiar to America are solely the result of democracy, is to attempt the solution of social problems by what Mr. Mill calls the "chemical method," the imperfection of which we cannot do better than describe in his own words.

“If so little can be done by the experimental method to determine the conditions of an effect of many combined causes in the case of medical science, still less is this method applicable to a class of phenomena more complicated than even those of physiology,—the phenomena of politics and history. There the plurality of causes exists in almost boundless excess, and the effects are for the most part inextricably interwoven with one another. To add to the embarrassment, most of the inquiries in political science relate to the production of effects of the most comprehensive description, such as the public wealth, public security, public morality, and the like,—results liable to be affected directly or indirectly, either in *plus* or in *minus*, by nearly every fact which exists or event which occurs in human society. The vulgar notion that the safe methods on political subjects are those of Baconian induction, that the true guide is not general reasoning but specific experience, will one day be quoted as among the most unequivocal marks of a low state of the speculative faculties in any age in which it is accredited. Nothing can be more ludicrous than the sort of parodies on experimental reasoning which one is accustomed to meet with, not in popular discussions only, but in grave treatises, when affairs of nations are the theme. ‘How,’ it is asked, ‘can an institution be bad, when the country has prospered under it?’ ‘How can such or such causes have contributed to the prosperity of one country, when another has prospered without them?’ Whoever makes use of an argument of this sort, not intending to deceive, should be sent back to learn the elements of some one of the more easy physical sciences. Such reasoners ignore the fact of the plurality of causes in the very case which affords the most signal example of it.” — *Logic*, Vol. II. pp. 489, 490, Eng. ed.

To make American society what it is, no one cause has sufficed, and what number or combination of causes has been instrumental in creating the phenomena which attract so much of the attention of political philosophers, it is impossible in the existing state of political science to determine.

It would be very unjust to M. de Tocqueville to leave it to be understood that he himself was not fully aware of all this. In fact, he expressly acknowledges in more than one place the existence of a plurality of causes for all the phenomena of American society, as well as that of other countries. He recognizes the immense influence “which the nature of the country, the origin of its inhabitants, the religion of the early settlers, their

acquired knowledge, their previous habits, have exercised and do exercise independently of democracy upon their mode of thought and feeling." (Vol. II. p. iv., Bowen's ed.) And he in various places warns his readers that the phenomena he is discussing are either due to other causes than "the principle of equality," or are rather American than democratic. But he seems frequently to forget this in the course of his reasoning, and on almost every page draws conclusions as to the probable condition of democratic society in general from what he describes as American society, or else draws these conclusions from general principles, and verifies them by an examination of American institutions or manners. The effect of either of these processes on the mind of the ordinary reader is, of course, very similar. We have not space to quote as fully as would be necessary, if we quoted at all, in support of these comments; but any one who consults the chapters entitled, respectively, "Why Americans are more addicted to Practical than to Theoretical Science," "The Literary Characteristics of Democratic Times," "Why American Writers and Orators often use an Inflated Style," "Of Parliamentary Eloquence in the United States," "Why the Americans are so Restless in the midst of their Prosperity," as well as most of the subsequent ones, will find the remarks we have made on the author's method of reasoning fully borne out. And the discussions of the nature and tendencies of democratic institutions which have been created in Europe by the war prove, we think, all but conclusively, that, whatever may have been his own state of mind in writing, De Tocqueville's influence on European opinion has been to a certain extent misleading. Hardly one book or article in newspaper or magazine has appeared on American affairs, in which any attempt is made to extract lessons from our condition for English guidance, which does not take it for granted, not only that democracy has produced everything that is considered objectionable in American society, but that democratic institutions transferred to any other country would give rise to precisely the same phenomena. A very large portion of the intense hostility of the upper classes to the United States is due to the prevalence amongst them of this delusion.

We cannot, for our part, help believing that any speculation as to the causes of the peculiar phenomena of American society, in which its outward circumstances during the last eighty years do not occupy the leading position, must lead to conclusions radically erroneous, and calculated to do great injustice not only to the American people, but to democracy itself. At these, nevertheless, M. de Tocqueville has only glanced, and most of those who have followed him in discussing democratic tendencies have overlooked them altogether.

If we inquire what are those phenomena of American society which it is generally agreed distinguish it from that of older countries, we shall find, we are satisfied, that by far the larger number of them may be attributed in a great measure to what, for want of a better name, we shall call "the frontier life" led by a large proportion of the inhabitants, and to the influence of this portion on manners and legislation, rather than to political institutions, or even to the equality of conditions. In fact, we think that these phenomena, and particularly those of them which excite most odium in Europe, instead of being the effect of democracy, are partly its cause, and that it has been to their agency more than to aught else that the democratic tide in America has owed most of its force and violence.

If we examine closely the history of the Northern Colonies, we shall find that, just as their founders left England in search of religious liberty, but were careful not to suffer it within their jurisdiction, so also, although they were most of them animated by republican sentiments, and although a commonwealth was doubtless their ideal polity, "the principle of equality" never obtained any recognition, either in fact or in theory, amongst them or their descendants, down to the time of the Revolution. The distinction between the gentleman and the common man not only existed in New England till the end of the last century, but it was recognized in forms of address, a mode of making it peculiarly repugnant to democratic feeling. Nor, so far as we can learn, was "the principle of authority" much weaker in the Colonies, at any period of their history, than in England. The civil functionaries in Boston and Plymouth were held in a respect very little if at all short of that which was rendered to such dignitaries in London.

The clergy exercised an influence over both manners and politics which, it is very certain, they never secured in the mother country. And the family bond, in spite of the very different conditions by which it was surrounded in the New World, was not, we believe, weaker than in the Old. Down to the time of the Revolution the *paterfamilias* was still a power in society, and exercised an amount of control over the life and conduct of his children, and received from them an amount of homage, which are no longer seen. Etiquette, both public and private, was still an object of attention and respect. Members of the Colonial legislatures were really representatives, and not, as now, delegates; and to sit amongst them was an honor to which persons without an established social position did not readily aspire. Legislation, too, though it might be based on erroneous principles, was rarely so reckless or so hasty as at present. And, though last not least, the religious organizations subjected nearly every member of the community to a discipline so rigid and exacting, that it has left marks on the New England mind and character which will probably not be effaced as long as the race lasts.

How was it that this state of things lasted so long? How was it that the ideas brought by the Colonists from the Old World retained their force for a century and a half, in spite of the facts that communication with the mother country was rare, slow, and difficult, that she exercised little or no influence at that time through her literature, for literature had not then been popularized, that the life led by the Colonists was such as to bring the idea of equality into the fullest prominence, that hereditary wealth was almost unknown amongst them, and that their social condition necessarily fostered individualism? How was it that that democratic tide which, within the last fifty years, has overwhelmed everything, during the previous hundred and fifty gave so few signs of its rising?

The *Saturday Review*, in an attempt it made about a year ago to answer these questions, ascribed the rapid progress of democracy in America since the Revolution to the stoppage at that period of the supply of younger sons of gentlemen, which, according to the writer, was then beginning to flow into the country, and would, if the separation had not taken place,

have continued to flow in ever since. Another explanation frequently offered by speculators of the same school is, that the change was due to the removal of the social influence of the monarchy, which, as long as the connection with the mother country lasted, prevented the republican form of government, which in reality already existed, from producing its natural effect on manners and ideas.

Both of these theories, however, receive a severe blow from the course of events in Australia. This colony was established on a thoroughly aristocratic basis. It received and continues to receive a larger contribution of "younger sons" than has fallen to the lot of any other, and great numbers of them went out with sufficient capital to enable them to maintain their social position. The land-laws, too, encouraged the appropriation of large tracts of country to their exclusive use as sheep-pastures, and for a long while rendered capital almost as essential to success in life there as in England. And the colony had that which we are now taught to consider the essential basis of aristocratic society, a servile class, in the convicts, and, more than this, it has remained up to the present in social and political dependence on England; yet in spite of all these things the progress of democracy there has been steady and rapid. Universal suffrage has been established throughout the island; the property qualification for members of the legislatures has been abolished; the vote is taken by ballot, and the press and public life are almost exact counterparts of those of the United States, and all this within eighty years of the first settlement of the country.

We are far from asserting that the idea of the equality of men, which, according to Professor Maine, was extracted from the Roman juridical maxim that "men were *born* equal," converted, by a not uncommon transformation, by the French literary men of the eighteenth century into a political dogma, and by them transmitted to the Virginian lawyers, had nothing to do, after its manipulation by the Jeffersonian school, with the spread of democracy in the United States. But it could, after all, amongst a people so intensely practical as the Americans, and so averse from speculation in politics, have effected very little, if the field had not been prepared for it by other

causes. It could never have embodied itself either in political or social movements of the popular mind, had it not been made ready for its reception by influences of vastly more potency than a foreign dogma can ever have amongst a people of Anglo-Saxon origin.

The agency which, in our opinion, gave democracy its first great impulse in the United States, which has promoted its spread ever since, and which has contributed most powerfully to the production of those phenomena in American society which hostile critics set down as peculiarly democratic, was neither the origin of the Colonists, nor the circumstances under which they came to the country, nor their religious belief; but the great change in the distribution of the population, which began soon after the Revolution, and which continues its operation up to the present time.

Population during the first hundred years of Colonial history was kept from spreading widely by its smallness, by the Indians, and by the attraction of the sea-coast, which furnished a ready means of intercommunication. The very feebleness of the Colonists in point of numbers constituted a strong motive for keeping closely together. The aborigines, who still held the forests all around them, were a standing menace to their security, and could only be kept in check by constant and watchful co-operation. Moreover, labor was too scarce to make the opening of roads into the interior an easy task; and even when opened, they furnished but sorry facilities for traffic. The weight of this consideration can be better appreciated by remembering that until the present century America was completely dependent on Europe, not only for the luxuries, but for most of the comforts and conveniences and many of the necessities of life. During the Colonial period, and especially during the early part of it, most of the clothing and tools of the inhabitants were brought from England; which fact, of course, in itself furnished a strong reason for not wandering far from the coast. Accordingly we find that, at the outbreak of the Revolution, the Colonies consisted of a string of settlements along the shore, lying a few miles apart, and carrying on most of their intercourse by water. Even the pioneers had rarely penetrated inland more than fifty or a hundred miles, and generally along the rivers only.

Now these obstacles to expansion performed for the Colonists precisely the same office which is performed in older countries by want of space, and exercised much the same influence on their social progress. It produced comparative density of population; and the effects of density of population, wherever it is not accompanied by very great numbers, as in large cities, are well known. It strengthens public opinion, represses individualism, tightens the social relations, and thus gives fixity to old customs and ideas, and stability to authority. It did all this and more for the early settlers. They landed from Europe in companies, with a social organization already formed; and the difficulty of scattering enabled them to preserve it, and preserve the ideas on which it was based, for over a century, in spite of the fact that their daily life was one which tended powerfully to develop the spirit of independence and self-reliance, — more so, in fact, than that of our backwoodsmen at the present day, for most of the appliances by which modern invention mitigates the hardships of pioneering were then wanting. The Church retained its hold on the young and on the old; the opinion of the community kept even the strongest natures in subjection, and all the more readily, because in those days the community to each of its members was the world. It was difficult to leave it, and there was no appeal from its judgments.

The history of colonization in all ages and climes tells much the same story. Wherever the colonists are prevented by any cause from scattering, and congregate from the outset in communities, the colony remains a tolerably faithful reflection of life and manners in the mother country.

The completeness with which the individual in the Greek republics was merged in the state or city, rendered the notion of individual action or individual existence, apart from the community to which he belonged, abhorrent to him. He never thought of himself in any character but that of a citizen. Consequently, we find that Greek colonization meant simply the production on a foreign shore of as faithful an image of the metropolis as circumstances would permit. The Colonists, far from scattering in search of fortune, massed themselves together in towns; and the result was that the Greek ideas and traditions and customs, both political and religious, were pre-

served with the most extraordinary fidelity; and this is rendered all the more remarkable from the fact that the elements of which ancient colonies were composed were at least as heterogeneous as those of the colonies of modern times.* The Roman colonies, except the military ones of later days, were founded under the influence of the same feeling, and remained, however far removed from the great city, her living images, — “*effigies parva, simulacraque populi Romani.*”

In those modern colonies which have, for any reason, been prevented from scattering widely, we witness much the same phenomena. The South American, who is gregarious by temperament, and who is cooped up on the edge of his great rivers by the impenetrability of tropical forests, remains to this day simply an indolent Spaniard, as conservative, as hostile to novelties or movement, as any peasant or shop-keeper in Aragon. And if we travel through Lower Canada, we find that the *habitants*, whose French horror of solitude, as well as the conquest of the country by the British, has kept them congregated in the old settlements, have preserved until very recently the social organization under which the first emigrants left their country. They continued to be the only faithful picture of the France which the revolution destroyed, and even yet any one who wishes to get an accurate knowledge of the feelings, relations, and ideas which formed the basis of the old *régime* would find them in far better preservation on the banks of the St. Lawrence than on those of the Loire or the Garonne.

The Revolutionary struggle in America produced the usual effect of great civil commotions. It unsettled industry, broke up families, reduced large numbers to poverty, and diminished production; and, by habituating large bodies of men to the

* Seneca's account of the causes which led to emigration in ancient times is curious, from its applicability to the emigration of our own day. “*Nec omnibus eadem causa relinquendi, quærendique patriam fuit. Alios excidia urbium suarum, hostilibus armis elapsos, in aliena, spoliatos suis, expulerunt; alios domestica seditio submovit; alios nimia superfluentis populi frequentia, ad exonerandas vires, emisit; alios pestilentia, aut frequens terrarum hiatus, aut aliqua intoleranda infelicitis solivitia ejecerunt; quosdam fertilis oræ et in majus laudatæ, fama corripit; alios alia causa excivit domibus suis.*” — *Consol. ad Helviam*. Cap. 6. War, revolution, overpopulation, pestilence, earthquakes, poverty of soil, and a vague desire of bettering their condition, are the causes that still send men forth in quest of “fresh fields and pastures new.”

change and license of camp life, rendered the even tenor of the way which they had previously pursued in their homes no longer tolerable. Then came the usual *sequelæ* of a long war. When peace was concluded, a spirit of restlessness was diffused through the country, and an eagerness for adventure, which the *fama fertilis oræ* that then began to be wafted from the West, intensified from day to day. The emigration westward set in with a vigor which had never before been witnessed; and thenceforward, for a short period, new States were rapidly added to the confederation. Kentucky came in in 1792; Tennessee, in 1796; Ohio, in 1802; but here there was a pause. The movement was checked evidently by the material difficulties which attended any further advance. Either it had reached a point at which remoteness from civilization became inconvenient or disagreeable, or else the drain on the population of the Eastern States had exhausted all that portion of it which was fit for pioneering. During the next fourteen years there was no new State added to the Union, except Louisiana, which was admitted in 1812; but in 1816 the stream appears to have again begun to flow into the wilderness. Indiana was admitted that year; Mississippi followed in 1817; Illinois, in 1818; Alabama, in 1819; and Missouri, in 1821. Now, as this increase was contemporaneous with the spread of steam navigation on the great rivers, it is fair to presume that it was in a large degree due to it. There was then another pause of fifteen years, at the close of which the influence of the railroads which were then getting into operation began to show itself; and from this time forward, the movement of population into the Western wilds has steadily increased from year to year, being swelled by the affluent from abroad which has poured into the United States between the years 1820 and 1860 the enormous number of 5,062,414 persons. Arkansas, Michigan, Texas, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and Kansas have thus been added to the Union in rapid succession. We omit from consideration the Pacific States, California, Oregon, and Nevada.

But it must be constantly borne in mind that this wonderful diffusion of population over the wilderness which seventy years ago lay between the seaboard States and the Mississippi Valley,

could not have taken place without the application of steam to locomotion. In the absence of this invention, the number of new settlements must always have borne a small proportion to the old ones. The portion of the community in which habits and modes of thought were tolerably fixed, in which experience was highly valued, traditions were held in reverence, and on which the past had left traces of greater or less depth, would have so largely exceeded the portion engaged in the work of actually reclaiming the wilderness, that it would either have held the latter in political and moral subjection, and have imposed its ideas and manners on it, or would, at all events, have remained impervious to its influence. The West, instead of creating, as it has done, a social type in many respects distinct, would have remained completely under Eastern influence, and have simply reproduced the society from which it had sprung, its manners, ideas, and aspirations.

But with the assistance of steamboats and railways, and of immigration from Europe, the pioneering element in the population, the class devoted to the task of creating new political and social organizations as distinguished from that engaged in perfecting old ones, assumed a great preponderance. It spread itself thinly over a vast area of soil, of such extraordinary fertility that a very slight amount of toil expended on it affords returns that might have satisfied even the dreams of Spanish avarice. The result has been very much what we might have concluded, *a priori*, that it would be. A society composed at the period of its formation mainly of young men, coming from all parts of the world in quest of fortune, released from the ordinary restraints of family, church, and public opinion, even of the civil law, naturally and inevitably acquires a certain contempt for authority and impatience of it, and individualism among them develops itself very rapidly. If you place this society, thus constituted, in the midst of a wilderness, where each member of it has to contend, tools in hand, with Nature herself for wealth, or even subsistence, the ties which bind him to his fellows will for a while at least be rarely anything stronger than that of simple contiguity; and the only mutual obligation which this relation suggests strongly is that of rendering assistance occasionally in overcoming material difficulties,—in

other words, the simplest bond which can unite human beings. Each person is from the necessity of the case so absorbed in his own struggle for existence, that he has seldom occasion or time for the consideration and cultivation of his social relations. He knows nothing of the antecedents of his neighbors, nor they of his. They are not drawn together, in all probability, by a single memory or association. They have drifted into the same locality, it is true, under the guidance of a common impulse, and this a selfish one. So that the settler gets into the habit of looking at himself as an individual, of contemplating himself and his career separate and apart from the social organization. We do not say that this breeds selfishness,—far from that; but it breeds individualism.

If the members of such a society are compelled to work hard for the gratification of their desires, to meet and overcome great difficulties and hardships and dangers, the result is naturally the production of great energy, of great audacity, and of a self-confidence that rises into conceit. And in this self-confidence is almost always contained a prodigious contempt for experience and for theory. The ends which such men have had in view having all been attained without the aid of either, they cannot see the use of them. They have found their own wits sufficient for the solution of every problem that has presented itself to them, so that deference to the authority of general maxims framed by persons who never found themselves placed in similar circumstances wears an air of weakness or absurdity.

And the devotion to material pursuits, which is necessary at the outset, is made absorbing in a country like the West, by the richness of the prizes which are offered to shrewd speculation and successful industry. Where possible or even probable gains are so great, the whole community gives itself up to the chase of them with an eagerness which is not democratic, but human. It would not, we think, be difficult to show that the existence in old countries of an idle class, content with moderate and secured fortunes, and devoted solely to amusement and the cultivation of art or literature, is largely due to the immense difficulty of making profitable investments. In those countries the capital accumulated by past generations is so large, and every field of industry is so thronged, that a very

large number of those who find themselves possessed of a sum of money are forced to relinquish all hope of increasing it. For we know that whenever, as during "the railway mania" in England, or Law's Mississippi schemes in France, the chance, real or imaginary, is offered of drawing such prizes as every day fall to the lot of hundreds in America, men of every grade and calling rush after them with an ardor which no training or tastes or antecedents seem sufficient to restrain. The desire for wealth is one of the constant forces of human society, and if it seems to assert its sway more imperiously here than in Europe, it is not because it is fostered by the equality of conditions, but because its gratification is surrounded by fewer obstacles.

If to strong individualism, contempt for experience, and eagerness in pursuit of material gain, we add want of respect for training, and profound faith in natural qualities, great indifference as to the future, the absence of a strong sense of social or national continuity, and of taste in art and literature and oratory, we have, we believe, enumerated the leading defects which European writers consider inherent in democratic society. But these, too, are marked peculiarities of all societies newly organized in a new country. We know them to be so by actual observation, for which modern colonization has afforded us abundant facilities; while it is safe to say that trustworthy illustrations of them have never been discovered in any society which was simply democratic and not new. There is no feature of life in new States in America more marked than the general belief of the people in their own originality, and their respect for this quality. The kind of man they most admire is one who has evolved rules for the conduct of life out of his own brain by the help of his own observation; and they entertain a strong distrust of men who have learned what they know by a fixed course of study, mainly because persons who have passed the early part of their lives in learning out of books or from teachers are generally found less fitted to grapple with the kind of difficulties which usually present themselves in Western life, than those who were compelled to learn to conquer them by actual contact with them. So that the "self-made man," as he is called, meaning the man who has surmounted, with little or no aid from education, those ob-

stacles by which the larger portion of the community find themselves hampered and harassed, is looked on as a sort of type of merit and ability.

The process by which the ideas that govern private life are transferred to the conduct of public affairs, is not difficult to understand. In a new community, in which there is not much time for either study or reflection, it would be difficult always to convince the public, even if any other kind of man were to be had, that the kind of man who displays most ability in the conduct of his own business is not the fittest to take charge of that of the public. That other qualities than those necessary for success in the career in which everybody else is running should be needed for legislation, is an idea which meets with no acceptance until enforced by experience. And in a really frontier village, in which no disturbing influences are in operation, it will probably be found that the prosperous management of a dry-goods store will be taken as strong indication of ability to fill the post of Secretary of the Treasury, and deal with the most intricate problems of national finance. But the successful politician in a new country, where deference for experience or culture has not yet grown up, is, after all, the man who has most facility in expressing the ideas which are filling the heads of his neighbors.

It may be taken as a general rule, that those who cannot look very far back do not look very far forward. Experience is the nurse of forethought. Youth is rarely troubled about to-morrow. Age is far-seeing, because it remembers so much. And communities made of the materials we are describing, as they have no past, are apt to be very careless about the future. The sense of political continuity, of the identity, for political purposes, of each generation with the one which has preceded it and the one which is to follow it, and of the consequent responsibility of each for the acts and promises of the other, is rarely deeply rooted in a state which has no past to dwell on. We are therefore not surprised to find that the doctrine of the absence of all right on the part of one generation to enter into any obligations that would bind its successor, — a doctrine utterly subversive of what is called “public faith,” and which, if carried out to its full extent, would reduce the intercourse

of civilized nations to the mere interchange of compliments or abuse, — was first openly preached and acted on in Mississippi, the person who now represents Southern statesmanship to the world being its author. But it is a doctrine which grows naturally in a new society. The reverse of it conflicts strongly with the notions of the proper limits of accountability, which are derived from the relations of individuals. There is little in the analogies presented by the relations of a man either with his family or his fellows, in such a society, to suggest the expediency or propriety of his helping, as a citizen, to repay money which was borrowed before he was born. And we think it will generally be found that, when a state formed by colonization, as carried on in modern times, displays a proper disposition with regard to the public liabilities, it is rather owing to the feeling of local pride than to a deep sense of responsibility. When a loan contracted by the government of California, a few years ago, was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, the people, when the question was submitted to them, at once shouldered the debt. But it was spoken of in their newspapers as a very remarkable display of virtue, as something of which the State might fairly be proud. There was evidently at the bottom of these congratulations an opinion that, in the absence of any legal obligation, the moral one was not sufficiently strong to be imperative.

The belief that the production of an inflated, bombastic style of speaking and writing is one of the necessary results of democracy is very wide-spread, and is supported by M. de Tocqueville with more than usual confidence. He says: —

“I have frequently remarked that the Americans, who generally treat of business in clear, plain language, devoid of all ornament, and so extremely simple as to be often coarse, are apt to become inflated as soon as they attempt a more poetical diction. They then vent their pomposity from one end of a harangue to the other; and to hear them lavish imagery on every occasion, one might fancy that they never spoke of anything with simplicity.

“The English less frequently commit a similar fault. The cause of this may be pointed out without much difficulty. In democratic communities, each citizen is habitually engaged in the contemplation of a very puny object, namely himself. If he ever raises his looks higher,

he perceives only the immense form of society at large, or the still more imposing aspect of mankind. His ideas are all either extremely minute and clear, or extremely general and vague; what lies between is a void. When he has been drawn out of his own sphere, therefore, he always expects that some amazing object will be offered to his attention; and it is on these terms alone that he consents to tear himself for a moment from the petty, complicated cares which form the charm and the excitement of his life." — Vol. II. p. 94.

But democracy produces this effect only in so far as it deprives writers and speakers of a high order of education, or draws them from a class which cannot or do not receive it. The uneducated or half-educated in all countries, and under every form of government, and in every condition of society, fall into an exaggerated and inflated style whenever they attempt to treat on paper or in public of any question not purely personal in its nature. The uncultivated Englishman or Frenchman is guilty of precisely the same rhetorical faults as the uncultivated American; and the only reason why American bombast makes more impression on European observers than that of their own countrymen is that there is more of it, as a class of persons who in Europe are hardly ever called on to address the public are in America tempted or obliged to do so very frequently. Rhetorical exaggeration is, in fact, an indication, not of a certain political or social state, but of a certain state of mental culture. How it is that taste is not a natural gift, and what kind of training is necessary for its acquisition, it is not necessary to discuss here. It is enough to know that, without training, no people, except perhaps the Greeks, has ever exhibited it. America itself furnishes a very striking illustration of the unsoundness of M. de Tocqueville's theory. A pure written and spoken style is found only in the democratic States of the Northeast, because there the writers and speakers are often either drawn from a cultivated class, or are under their influence. The literature and oratory of the aristocratic States of the South, on the contrary, are marked by an exaggeration, violence, and affectation so barbarous, that it may safely be said that no orators or writers who have ever figured in history have fallen to the same level. And it is a striking proof of the extent to which the European public has

been led astray on these subjects, that an English legal periodical of high standing, commenting a few months ago on the absurdity of the harangue delivered by Muller's counsel in New York, assigned as one of the excuses for Southern secession the natural disgust felt by "cultivated gentlemen" at the grotesqueness, absurdity, and inflation which democracy infused into writing and public speaking at the North. An assertion displaying greater ignorance of the peculiar characteristics of the North and of the South, it would be hard to meet with.

It may be said, however, that if democracy either deprives the highly educated class of all influence, and thus prevents their establishing an authoritative standard of taste, or if it places the half-educated in all the prominent positions in public life, so that it is they who give the oratory of the country its peculiar character, it is really as much responsible for the national tendency to bombast as if it produced it by its direct action. But the answer to this is, that nearly all the extravagance and inflation of speech or composition which are now to be met with in America are contributed either by the South or West, both of which are just in that stage of mental culture in which inflation of language is produced as naturally as weeds on a rank soil. The intense and necessary absorption of the West in the work of developing the material resources of the country puts high cultivation out of the question, but it does not do away with the necessity of government. Members of Congress have still to be elected; State Legislatures have still to meet; and weighty questions have to be discussed by somebody, — and, in default of people of taste, they have to be discussed by people who have no taste, by men who labor under the usual weakness and delusion of the uneducated, that simple and straightforward language is not fit for use in dealing with great public affairs. If it be asked how it is that this class so largely preponderates in Congress, and in public life generally, as to present itself to the world as a fair specimen of the highest culture that democracy can produce, we reply that the new States have now for many years acquired a great preponderance over the older ones in population and wealth and resources, and consequently political preponderance also. Upon this great mass of powerful, energetic rusticity, — we do

not use the word as a term of reproach,—the cultivation of the East has so far been able to make but very little impression. And this preponderance has been so overwhelming, that the West has succeeded to a certain extent in propagating in the East its ideas and manners, both political and social. It has succeeded in diffusing to some degree, even in New England, its contempt for and indifference to refinement or culture, its mistrust of men who have made politics a study, and its faith in the infallibility of majorities, not simply as a necessary political assumption, but as an ethical fact. Its influence in Congress is of course paramount, and its influence on the government every year increases. It now supplies our Presidents, a large body of our legislators, and a large portion of our army. It gives its tone to the national thought, and its direction to the national policy. And as might be expected, it has, with its rude, wild energy, its excess of animal life, completely overwhelmed the thinkers of the older States, and driven most of them into private life, and taken upon itself to represent American democracy to the world. American democracy is thus made answerable by superficial observers for faults which flow not from its own nature, but from the outward circumstances of some of those who live under it.

We need hardly say, that we are very far from asserting that the state of society which we have been describing as “Western” can be predicated literally either of the whole West or of any part of it. There is probably not a village in it of which our picture is true in every particular. There are doubtless to be found in every district many departures from the general type which we have sketched, many modifications effected by the presence of cultivated people, or by the extraordinary intelligence and unusually favorable antecedents of the inhabitants. What we have endeavored to portray is the general features of society in new countries which have been subjected to the ordinary agencies of frontier life, and exempted from the disturbing influences of older and more finished organizations. And in so far as our sketch is inaccurate as applied to the new States of the Union, to the same extent will our description of their influence on the East require modification. The study of society is not one of the exact sciences ; and the

utmost that the most careful inquirer can hope for is an approximation to the truth. This is all that we pretend to have achieved in the present instance, but it is sufficient for our purpose.

In so far as the influence exercised by that portion of the population which is immersed in the cares and toils of frontier life on the national character, or manners, or politics, or literature, or oratory, has been deteriorating or obstructive, it is, of course, fair matter for regret to all friends of rational progress. But those who are most disheartened by the contemplation of its effects may find abundant consolation in the consideration that its action is but temporary, and that every day that passes weakens its force and hastens its disappearance. The greatest fault of new countries is their newness, and for this the great remedy is time. As soon as the population gets settled in its seat, and its attention has ceased to be distracted by a multiplicity of prizes, and its energies to be absorbed in the mere struggle for shelter and food, the polishing process begins. This struggle, if it have hardened the hands, and tanned the foreheads, and roughened the manners of those engaged in it, has also most certainly developed qualities which, if they do not themselves constitute national greatness, are its only sure and lasting foundation. No friend of democracy who has watched the course of the West in this war can help feeling his blood stirred and his hopes strengthened by the vigor with which it has thrown itself into the strife, and the great richness of the blood and brain which it has sent into the arena. All the great generals of the war are Western men. No higher capacity for organization, for conceiving great enterprises, and conducting them with courage and fortitude, accuracy and punctuality, has been displayed than in those mushroom communities which yesterday were not. And if we turn from the military to the political field, we find everywhere the most striking proofs of the sagacity, foresight, patriotism, and tenacity of their population. We wish we could say there had been exhibited in the East so general, profound, and just an appreciation of the remoter bearings of this great contest, of its possible influence on society and government, as has been exhibited in the West.

There are no fundamental characteristics of "an imperial

race," which the people of the new States have not revealed; and those who know them best see in the progress they are now making every reason to feel satisfied that the great material strength which they are developing will be, ere long, controlled and directed by a very high order of cultivation, both intellectual and æsthetic, and perhaps richer, more varied, and more original in many of its manifestations than any that has been seen in modern times. If the West should in future answer all the demands made on it by civilization with the alacrity and success with which it has answered those made on it by the political crisis through which we are now passing, the human race would, in a very short time, be even more indebted to it than the nation is already.

If, indeed, the defects which foreign observers see, and many of which Americans acknowledge and deplore, in the politics and society of the United States were fairly chargeable to democracy,—if "the principle of equality" were necessarily fatal to excellence in the arts, to finish in literature, to simplicity and force in oratory, to fruitful exploration in the fields of science, to statesmanship in the government, to discipline in the army, to grace and dignity in social intercourse, to subordination to lawful authority, and to self-restraint in the various relations of life,—the future of the world would be such as no friend of the race would wish to contemplate: for the spread of democracy is on all sides acknowledged to be irresistible. Even those who watch its advance with most fear and foreboding confess that most civilized nations must ere long succumb to its sway. Its progress in some countries may be slower than in others, but it is constant in all; and it is accelerated by two powerful agencies,—the Christian religion and the study of political economy.

The Christian doctrine that men, however unequal in their condition or in their gifts on earth, are of equal value in the eyes of their Creator, and are entitled to respect and consideration, if for no other reason, for the simple one that they are human souls, long as it has been preached, has, strange to say, only very lately begun to exercise any perceptible influence on politics. It led a troubled and precarious life—for nearly eighteen hundred years in conventicles and debating clubs, in the

romance of poets, in the dreams of philosophers and the schemes of philanthropists. But it is now found in the cabinets of kings and statesmen, on the floor of parliament-houses, and in the most secret of diplomatic conferences. It gives shape and foundation to nearly every great social reform, and its voice is heard above the roar of every revolution.

And it derives invaluable aid in keeping its place and extending its influence in national councils from the rapid spread of the study of political economy, a science which is based on the assumption that men are free and independent. There is hardly one of its principles which is applicable to any state of society in which each individual is not master of his own actions and sole guardian of his own welfare. In a community in which the relations of its members are regulated by status and not by contract, it has no place and no value. And the natural result of the study and discussion which the ablest thinkers have expended on it during the last eighty years has been to place before the civilized world in the strongest light the prodigious impulse which is given to human energy and forethought and industry, and the great gain to society at large, which results from the recognition in legislation of the capacity, as well as of the right, of each human being to seek his own happiness in his own way. Of course no political system in which this principle has a place can long avoid conceding to all who live under it equality before the law ; and from equality before the law to the possession of an equal share in the making of the laws, there is, as everybody must see who is familiar with modern history, but a very short step.

If this spread of democracy, however, was sure, as its enemies maintain, to render great attainments and great excellence impossible or rare, to make literary men slovenly and inaccurate and tasteless, artists mediocre, professors of science dull and unenterprising, and statesmen conscienceless and ignorant, it would threaten civilization with such danger that no friend of progress could wish to see it. But it is difficult to discover on what it is, either in history or human nature, that this apprehension is founded. M. de Tocqueville and all his followers take it for granted that the great incentive to excellence, in all countries in which excellence is found, is the pat-

ronage and encouragement of an aristocracy ; that democracy is generally content with mediocrity. But where is the proof of this ? The incentive to exertion which is widest, most constant, and most powerful in its operation in all civilized countries, is the desire of distinction ; and this may be composed either of love of fame or love of wealth, or of both. In literary and artistic and scientific pursuits, sometimes the strongest influence is exerted by a love of the subject. But it may be safely said that no man has ever yet labored in any of the higher callings to whom the applause and appreciation of his fellows was not one of the sweetest rewards of his exertions. There is probably not a masterpiece in existence, either in literature or in art, probably few discoveries in science have ever been made, which we do not owe in a large measure to the love of distinction. Who paints pictures, or has ever painted them, that they may delight no eye but his own ? Who writes books for the mere pleasure of seeing his thoughts on paper ? Who discovers or invents, and is willing, provided the world is the better of his discoveries or inventions, that another should enjoy the honor ? Fame has, in short, been in all ages and in all countries recognized as one of the strongest springs of human action, —

“ The spur that doth the clear spirit raise
To scorn delight and live laborious days,” —

sweetening toil, robbing danger and poverty and even death itself of their terrors.

And what is there, we would ask, in the nature of democratic institutions, that should render this great spring of action powerless, that should deprive glory of all radiance, and put ambition to sleep ? Is it not notorious, on the contrary, that one of the most marked peculiarities of democratic society, or of a society drifting towards democracy, is the fire of competition which rages in it, the fevered anxiety which possesses all its members to rise above the dead level to which the law is ever seeking to confine them, and by some brilliant stroke or other become something higher and more remarkable than their fellows ? The secret of that great restlessness, which is one of the most disagreeable accompaniments of life in democratic countries, is in fact due to the eagerness of everybody to

grasp the prizes of which in aristocratic countries only the few have much chance. And in no other society is success more worshipped, is distinction of any kind more wildly flattered and caressed. Where is the successful author, or artist, or discoverer, the subject of greater homage than in France or America? And yet in both the principle of equality reigns supreme; and his advancement in the social scale has gone on *pari passu* in every country with the spread of democratic ideas and manners. Grub Street was the author's retreat in the aristocratic age; in this democratic one, he is welcome at the King's table, and sits at the national council-board. In democratic societies, in fact, excellence is the first title to distinction; in aristocratic ones, there are two or three others which are far stronger, and which must be stronger, or aristocracy could not exist. The moment you acknowledge that the highest social position ought to be the reward of the man who has the most talent, you make aristocratic institutions impossible. But to make the thirst for distinction lose its power over the human heart, you must do something more than establish equality of conditions; you must recast human nature itself.

Nor does the view which M. de Tocqueville takes, and which Mr. Mill in his "Dissertations and Discussions" seems to share, of the character of the literature which democratic societies are likely to call for, or have supplied to them, derive much support from experience. Mr. Mill says, that in a democratic society

"There is a greatly augmented number of moderate successes, fewer great literary and scientific reputations. Elementary and popular treatises are immensely multiplied; superficial information far more widely diffused; but there are fewer who devote themselves to thought for its own sake, and pursue in retirement those profounder researches, the results of which can only be appreciated by a few. Literary productions are seldom highly finished; they are got up to be read by many, and to be read but once. If the work sells for a day, the author's time and pains will be better laid out in writing a second, than in improving the first."

There could scarcely be a better answer to this than the immense sale which the works of both Mr. Mill himself and of M. de Tocqueville meet with here and in England. They

are both philosophical and highly finished, and yet they are read and studied by thousands in the two countries in which democracy is either triumphant or rapidly spreading. Illustrations of the same kind might, if we had space, be indefinitely multiplied. We will mention only one other. If we take that branch of literature, history, in which more than most others accuracy and research are essential, in which painstaking and industry and careful attention to details are absolutely necessary to give the result any real value, what do we find? Why, that it is a field of inquiry which, until democratic times, was barely scratched over, and that it is for the gratification and instruction of this much despised democratic "many" that it has been for the first time deeply ploughed and carefully cultivated. There is, we believe, hardly a single historical work composed prior to the end of the last century, except perhaps Gibbon's, which, judged by the standard that the criticism of our day has set up, would not, though written for "the few," be pronounced careless, slipshod, or superficial. Grote, Hallam, Motley, Prescott, Martin, Niebuhr, Mommsen, the most laborious, accurate, and critical historical inquirers the world has yet seen, have been produced by a democratic age, and have written for a democratic public. Compare them as to thoroughness and completeness with any of their predecessors of any age, and you are astonished by the contrast; and yet millions read and admire them. So also the first attempt to apply the historical method to the study of the philosophy of law has been made within two or three years, and the result is a work of extraordinary profundity, which is in everybody's hands. We might, by looking into other branches of knowledge, produce innumerable examples of the same kind, all going to show, in our opinion, that although there is, and will always be in every democratic community, an immense mass of slipshod, careless writing and speaking, the demand for accuracy, for finish, perhaps not in form, but certainly in substance, for completeness in all efforts to discover truth or enlighten mankind, so far from diminishing, grows with the spread of knowledge and the multiplication of readers.

There are some, however, who, while acknowledging that the love of distinction will retain its force under every form of so-

cial or political organization, yet maintain that to excel in the arts, science, or literature requires leisure, and the possession of leisure implies the possession of fortune. This men in a democratic society cannot have, because the absence of great hereditary wealth is necessary to the perpetuation of democracy. Every man, or nearly every man, must toil for a living; and therefore it becomes impossible for him to gratify the thirst for distinction, let him feel it ever so strongly. The attention he can give to literature or art or science must be too desultory and hasty, his mental training too defective, to allow him to work out valuable results, or conduct important researches. To achieve great things in these fields, it is said and insinuated, men must be elevated, by the possession of fortune, above the vulgar, petty cares of life; their material wants must be provided for before they can concentrate their thoughts with the requisite intensity on the task before them. Therefore it is to aristocracy we must look for any great advance in these pursuits.

The history of literature and art and philosophy is, however, very far from lending confirmation to this opinion. If it teaches us anything, it teaches us that the possession of leisure, far from having helped men in the pursuit of knowledge, seems to have impeded them. Those who have pursued it most successfully are all but invariably those who have pursued it under difficulties. The possession of great wealth no doubt gives facilities for study and cultivation which the mass of mankind do not possess; but it at the same time exerts an influence on the character which, in a vast majority of cases, renders the owner unwilling to avail himself of them. We owe to the Roman aristocracy the great fabric of Roman jurisprudence; but, since their time, what has any aristocracy done for art and literature, or law? They have for over a thousand years been in possession of nearly the whole resources of every country in Europe. They have had its wealth, its libraries, its archives, its teachers, at their disposal; and yet was there ever a more pitiful record than the list of "Royal and Noble Authors." One can hardly help being astonished, too, at the smallness and paltriness of the legacies which the aristocracy of the aristocratic age has bequeathed to this democratic age which is succeeding it. It has, indeed, handed down to us many glorious

traditions, many noble and inspiring examples of courage and fortitude and generosity. The democratic world would certainly be worse off than it is if it never heard of the Cid, or Bayard, or Du Guesclin, of Montrose, or Hampden, or Russell. But what has it left behind it for which the lover of art may be thankful, by which literature has been made richer, philosophy more potent or more fruitful? The painting and sculpture of modern Europe owe not only their glory, but their very existence, to the labors of poor and obscure men. The great architectural monuments by which its soil is covered were hardly any of them the product of aristocratic feeling or liberality. If we except a few palaces and a few fortresses, we owe nearly all of them to the labor or the genius or the piety of the democratic cities which grew up in the midst of feudalism. If we take away from the sum total of the monuments of Continental art all that was created by the Italian republics, the commercial towns of Germany and Flanders, and the communes of France, and by the unaided efforts of the illustrious obscure, the remainder would form a result poor and pitiful indeed. We may say much the same thing of every great work in literature, and every great discovery in science. Few of them have been produced by men of leisure, nearly all by those whose life was a long struggle to escape from the vulgarest and most sordid cares. And what is perhaps most remarkable of all is, that the Catholic Church, the greatest triumph of organizing genius, the most impressive example of the power of combination and of discipline which the world has ever seen, was built up and has been maintained by the labors of men drawn from the humblest ranks of society.

Aristocracy applied itself exclusively for ages to the profession of arms. If there was anything at which it might have seemed hopeless for democracy to compete with it, it was in the raising, framing, and handling of armies. But the very first time that a democratic society found itself compelled to wage war in defence of its own ideas, it displayed a force, an originality, a vigor and rapidity of conception, in this, to it, new pursuit, which speedily laid Europe at its feet. And the great master of the art of war, be it ever remembered, was born in obscurity and bred in poverty.

Nor; long as men of leisure have devoted themselves to the art of government, have they made any contributions worth mentioning to political science. They have displayed, indeed, consummate skill and tenacity in pursuing any line of policy on which they have once deliberately fixed; but all the great political reforms have been, though often carried into effect by aristocracies, conceived, agitated, and forced on the acceptance of the government by the middle and lower classes. The idea of equality before the law was originated in France by literary men. In England, the slave-trade was abolished by the labors of the middle classes. The measure met with the most vigorous opposition in the House of Lords. The emancipation of the negroes, Catholic emancipation, Parliamentary reform, law reform, especially the reform in the criminal law, free trade, and, in fact, nearly every change which has had for its object the increase of national happiness and prosperity, has been conceived by men of low degree, and discussed and forced on the upper classes by men busy about many other things.

We are, however, very far from believing that democratic society has no dangers or defects. What we have been endeavoring to show is, that the inquiry into their nature and number has been greatly impeded by the natural disposition of foreign observers to take the United States as a fair specimen of what democracy is under the most favorable circumstances. The enormous extent of unoccupied land at our disposal, which raises every man in the community above want, by affording a ready outlet for surplus population, is constantly spoken of as a condition wholly favorable to the democratic experiment, — more favorable than could possibly offer itself elsewhere. In so far as it contributes to the general happiness and comfort, it no doubt makes the work of government easy; but what we think no political philosopher ought to forget is, that it also offers serious obstacles to the settlement of a new society on a firm basis, and produces a certain appearance of confusion and instability, both in manners and ideas, which unfit it to furnish a basis for any inductions of much value as to the tendencies to defects either of an equality of conditions or of democratic institutions.